Alaskan Way Viaduct

Central Waterfront Open House Summary

Feb. 12, 2008

Meeting Overview

WSDOT, King County and the City of Seattle hosted an open house at the new Cooper Elementary School in West Seattle on Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008. The purpose of the open house was to update citizens about the central waterfront project, including how potential solutions will be evaluated and what the role of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee is.

Advertisement

Several advertisement methods were used for the open house:

- An announcement in two Alaskan Way Viaduct (AWV) program e-mail updates to more than 3,000 subscribers.
- A notice on the AWV program Web site (www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct).
- An e-mail to elected leaders and key stakeholders, including Seattle-area state legislators, City Council members, King County Council members, and Stakeholder Advisory Committee members.
- A notice to the community calendars of citywide and community newspapers.
- Postcard advertisements distributed by advisory committee members and placed at City Hall and other public buildings. An electronic version of the advertisement was also forwarded to West Seattle listserves.
- Posters in public buildings and popular businesses in the West Seattle, Pioneer Square, International District, SODO, downtown, Ballard, and Fremont neighborhoods
- Media advisory to print, radio and television reporters.

Format of the Open House

After signing in at the registration table, attendees received a meeting guide and had the opportunity to sign up for the public comment period. The meeting guide listed the agenda for the open house and described each of the display stations. Though attendees could visit the stations in any order, a logical progression was suggested.

Six stations of display boards were set up around the room:

Station 1: New project area
Station 2: Central waterfront evaluation process
Station 3: Measures for central waterfront alternatives
Station 4: Moving forward to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct
Station 5: King County transit initiatives
Station 6: City of Seattle's Urban Mobility Plan

At station 3 there were six flip charts that each listed one of the guiding principles for finding a solution for the central waterfront. Listed below each principle were sample measures for

evaluating central waterfront alternatives. Attendees were encouraged to write their own suggestions for measures on the charts.

AWV Program Director Ron Paananen, King County DOT Assistant Director Ron Posthuma, and Seattle DOT Deputy Director Robert Powers offered brief comments. They introduced themselves and described how a recommendation for the central waterfront will be developed.

Attendees were given the opportunity to provide public comments at a microphone. The comments were recorded by a court reporter. Eleven people chose to provide public comments, and they each had two minutes to present their views. Attendees also could submit their comments on paper comment forms.

Attendance
Approximately 80 people attended the open house.

What We Heard – Comment Summary
Feedback was collected through comment forms, flip charts located at station 3, and conversations with program staff members.

A majority of the public comment speakers asked for a retrofit of the existing Alaskan Way Viaduct. Two called for construction of a bridge spanning Elliott Bay.

Of the ten comment forms that were submitted, four people asked for a retrofit of the existing Alaskan Way Viaduct; one person proposed an open-top tunnel; and one person asked the program team to consider the cost of gridlock on commuters and transit/freight when the viaduct is removed.

Verbatim Comments
This section includes verbatim comments received on station 3 (Measures for central waterfront alternatives) flip charts. A transcript of speakers' comments and a list of comments received on comment forms are available upon request.

Public Safety
- Less capacity will cause congestion leading to driver frustration and pedestrian danger.
- A surface option will endanger pedestrians.
- Retrofitting the viaduct will cost billions less.

Efficient Movement of People and Goods
- Cater to mass transit and the movement of goods, not single occupancy vehicles.
- Seattle needs the viaduct. Convenience and capacity are important.
- Closing the left exits on I-5 will create more efficient movement.
- Maintain current capacity.
- Close viaduct for one week to judge impact on business, etc.
- Build a bay bridge – Hwy 99/Ballard to SODO/Hwy 509.
- Increase mass transit.

- 1st Ave. South bridge as north terminus. No car further northbound. Use 1st Ave South. 4th Ave North.
- Southbound – no cars inside 45th.
- New viaduct needs more not fewer thru lanes.

Economic Vitality

- Evaluate the downtown land owners expectation to a +$1.6-2 billion in one-time benefit from viaduct removal, to the potential annual loss of $2 billion to the maritime industry, manufacturing and the economic cost of grid-lock on commuters, transit/freight when the viaduct is removed.
- West Seattle needs to retain the viaduct to survive economically. The retrofit is the only option that will accomplish this.
- Evaluate economic effect of attractiveness/unattractiveness of central waterfront area to tourists and residents.
- Look at transportation system as the best way to deal with solutions in this corridor.
- Evaluate how long different options would severely disrupt traffic for the port, commuters and businesses in the area.

Seattle as a Place for People

- Street solution moves and increases sound levels throughout all downtown Seattle.
- Citywide park, waterfront access.
- Public access to water.
- Include more art in new structure.
- Encourage families staying in Seattle – provide ways for them to have cars to take children around.
- Reliable, family-friendly transit.
- Replacing the viaduct will be an expensive inconvenience that will benefit very few people.
- Ensure the option chosen is well-designed from a pedestrian's point of view.
- Balance historic preservation, community cohesiveness in downtown with transportation solutions moving people and goods to and through downtown.
- Do not cater to just those living downtown.
- A "bay bridge" would leave the waterfront open to people.
- Air pollution on gridlocked surface streets will be astronomical.
- The viaduct offers the poor man's view of the bay and downtown. Removal would be a developers' heyday.
- Another option should be considered – a sub-surface cut with 4+ lanes 'below' current street level with air rights use for pedestrian access to waterfront. This option should be built before current viaduct is razed. In the 'interim' make reasonable retrofit repairs to the viaduct to maintain safe traffic flows.
- Seattle needs efficient bypass to connect neighborhoods north and south of downtown.

Fiscal Responsibility

- If repairs are being made to the seawall, consider a tunnel.
- Leave it as is. Need money to balance state budget.

- What are the funding sources?
- The Herbert study identifies a $2 billion economic penalty even from partial closure. At that rate here are the "unfunded mandate" cost to the people over project life:

	Hard Cost + Unfunded Econ. Penalty	
Retrofit	$1.17 billion	(little if any closure)
Rebuild	$25.6 billion	(10 years of partial closure)
Tunnel	$28.9 billion	(7.9 years of partial closure)

- The retrofit is the only fiscal responsible option.
- Identify supplemental funding sources, to limit general taxpayer exposure.
- Evaluate downside risk under <u>full</u> range of climate change scenarios.
- Move beyond planning because the catastrophic risk to the waterfront and the city is too great to wait.
- Estimate lost tax revenue from crashing property values when W. Seattle, Ballard are landlocked if no viaduct exists.
- Estimate cost to businesses of construction process and lack of throughput while construction causes major delays.

Environmental Health

- Street solution is not environmentally friendly.
- What is current carbon "footprint" of the 650 buses moving through downtown during AM or PM rush hour? How many passenger miles does this footprint support?
- Demolishing the Alaskan Way Viaduct would represent a waste of embodied energy equivalent of 22,000 barrels of Iraqi crude (44,000,000 lbs. of concrete wasted).
- These principals are skewed to a predetermined outcome. All options are not on the table.
- Create a greenspace corridor that could be adapted to accommodate a future/potential waterfront mass transit route.
- Plan beyond "design year" to likely energy, environmental, climate change scenarios long range, e.g. 2050, 2100.
- No Big Dig in Seattle. Too much zeal from developers.
- Think about environmental future – rise in ocean levels and how that affects seawall upgrades, viaduct, bridge, and tunnels.

<u>Next Steps</u>

Comments from the open house will be distributed to the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Comments on station 3, (Measures for central waterfront alternatives) will be added to feedback received at the January Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Like measures will be combined, and WSDOT, King County and the City of Seattle will work with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee for a final list of measures.